

## United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-3005

October 25, 2018

Ann Marie Buerkle, Chairman  
U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission  
4330 East West Highway  
Bethesda, MD 20814

Chairman Buerkle,

I write to express serious concerns about the continued dangers of infant walkers in light of a recent study published in *Pediatrics*, which found that emergency rooms treat 2,000 children for infant walker-related injuries every year.<sup>1</sup> Despite previous actions taken by the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC), infant walkers remain unsafe for children. Therefore, I request information regarding how the CPSC plans to address this issue.

As you know, infant walkers provide very young children who are not yet able to walk with increased mobility. Unfortunately, this increased mobility comes with a higher risk of dangerous falls and greater exposure to hazardous situations and environmental toxins. In fact, most injuries connected with infant walkers result from falling down stairs.<sup>2</sup> In addition to heightened risk of falling, infant walkers also give children access to environments or objects they are not normally exposed to, which can result in proximity injuries related to falling into pools, grabbing sharp objects, pulling hot materials from stoves, and ingesting poisons or toxic substances.<sup>3</sup> Infant walker-related injuries, therefore, range from skull fractures, concussions, broken bones, burns, poisoning, and drowning.<sup>4</sup>

While actions taken by the CPSC in the last 20 years have helped drastically decrease injuries related to infant walkers, the study shows that infant walkers still pose a significant threat to children.<sup>5</sup> That study, published last month in *Pediatrics*, the official journal of the American Academy of Pediatrics, found that every year, emergency rooms treat 2,000 children for injuries sustained while using infant walkers. This number is unacceptably high.

To ensure children are protected, and parents are equipped with the most updated information, I request responses to the following questions:

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<sup>1</sup> Sims, Chounthirath, et al, "Infant Walker-Related Injuries in the United States," *Pediatrics*, American Academy of Pediatrics, Volume 142, Number 4, October 2018.

<http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/pediatrics/early/2018/09/13/peds.2017-4332.full.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Id.

<sup>3</sup> Id.

<sup>4</sup> Id.

<sup>5</sup> Id.

- 1) Does the CPSC believe its current mandatory safety standard adequately prevents infant walker-related injuries?
- 2) Does CPSC believe any updates to its mandatory safety standards could prevent the injuries as described in the *Pediatrics* study?
- 3) Would the CPSC consider banning infant walkers if mandatory safety standards are not sufficiently preventing thousands of infant walker-related injuries?
- 4) The *Pediatrics* study states that strong children may be able to circumvent safety standards put in place to prevent injury.<sup>6</sup> What is the CPSC doing to tackle injuries sustained by infants that were strong enough to override mandatory safety standards designed to stop children from falling down stairs?
- 5) When comparing the four years prior to and the four years following CPSC's implementation of its mandatory safety standard rule in 2010, injuries associated with falling down stairs decreased by 40.7 percent.<sup>7</sup> However, injuries related to other sources increased by 2.3 percent. How does CPSC intend to reduce proximity injuries?
- 6) Does CPSC believe there are injury patterns, such as proximity injuries, that are not addressed in the commission's mandatory safety standard for infant walkers?
- 7) What is the CPSC doing to stop the import of noncompliant infant walkers?
- 8) From 2001 to 2010, CPSC issued 10 infant walker recalls. However, since only about 10 percent of recalled children's products are properly corrected, replaced, or returned, many noncompliant infant walkers may remain in the general population.<sup>8</sup> How will CPSC educate parents and families on the dangers of older products?
- 9) Does CPSC include, as part of its education plan, strategies for ensuring these dangerous, noncompliant products are not dumped onto low-income families through donations?
- 10) Has the CPSC received additional complaints, other than those outlined in the *Pediatrics* report, regarding infant walkers? If so, what do those reports indicate about injuries related to infant walkers?

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<sup>6</sup> Ridenour MV. "How effective are brakes on infant walkers?" *Perception and Motor Skills*. 1997;84(3, pt 1):1051-1057

<sup>7</sup> Sims, Chounthirath, et al, "Infant Walker-Related Injuries in the United States," *Pediatrics*, American Academy of Pediatrics, Volume 142, Number 4, October 2018.

<http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/pediatrics/early/2018/09/13/peds.2017-4332.full.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> Id.

11) Is the CPSC aware of problems with specific infant walkers that have not been made public?

I appreciate CPSC's willingness to answer my questions. Additionally, to obtain a better understanding of the extent of infant walker-related injuries, I respectfully request CPSC:

- Update the infant walker incident data published in the final rule documents in 2010.<sup>9</sup> This will assist in ascertaining the extent of injuries today and if the mandatory standard has decreased those injuries. The update should include data from National Electronic Injury Surveillance System, consumer reports, medical examiner reports and any other sources.
- Share any information from In-depth Investigations (IDI's) or SaferProducts.gov reports that might shed light on the types of injuries still occurring.

Thank you for taking the time to address this important matter. I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



Robert Menendez

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<sup>9</sup> United States, Consumer Product Safety Commission, "Consumer Product Safety Commission, Safety Standard for Infant Walkers: Final Rule," Final Rule, June 21, 2010.  
<https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2010/06/21/2010-14323/safety-standard-for-infant-walkers-final-rule>